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ABSTRACT

A summative evaluation assessed the progress made by the Westport Middle School Communications/Writing Magnet program's third year of operation. Part of the Kansas City, Missouri, School District's Long-Range Magnet School Plan, the program consists of 11 theme strands (text, creative writing/composition, dramatic arts, public speaking, journalism, public/human relations, computer, commercial arts, and photography). Approximately 700 students per year were enrolled in the middle school. Data included classroom observations, school visits, perception data gathered through interviews and survey instruments, and achievement data. Results indicated that: (1) teachers felt that student absences hindered their attempts to implement the theme to some degree; (2) teachers were committed to the theme and to each other; (3) student discipline, instructional leadership, and access to supplies remained concerns for the teachers; (4) the theme was not the primary reason for being at Westport for most of the parents and students; (5) most of the theme strands were fully implemented; (6) the majority of students were satisfied with the program and positive about their teachers; (7) most of the parents were satisfied with the program; and (8) students at all grade levels scored below the school district mean percentile scores and the national norms on a standardized test. Recommendations are to provide a supportive, capable administration, develop and implement a discipline policy, ensure that the learning resource center is easily accessible, provide teachers with relevant theme-centered inservice opportunities, and make supplies easily accessible to teachers. (Contains 10 references, and 14 tables and 11 figures of data. An appendix of data and the evaluation report feedback form are attached.) (RS)

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ED 376 480

Process/Product Evaluation (Summative): Westport Communications/Writing Magnet Middle School

1990-1991
1991-1992
1992-1993

Evaluation Office

The School District of
Kansas City, Missouri

July 1993

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Process/Product Evaluation (Summative): Westport Communications/Writing Magnet Middle School

1990-1991
1991-1992
1992-1993

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July 1993

Evaluation Office
Desegregation Planning Department
The School District of Kansas City, Missouri

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Process/Product Evaluation (Summative): Westport Communications/Writing Magnet Middle School

1990-1991
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Major Findings and Recommendations

The Westport Middle School Communications/Writing Magnet completed its third year of operations as part of the Kansas City, Missouri School District's *Long-Range Magnet School Plan* (Hale and Levine, 1986). This summative evaluation documents the progress made by Westport Middle in implementing the communications/writing theme. The end-of-year report presents data collected through the program's third year of operation, including student demographics; program implementation information as obtained through classroom and building observations; achievement data; and perceptions of teachers, parents, and students.

Enrollment and Attendance. Westport Middle reduced minority enrollment at least by two percentage points from the year previous (which is the desegregation guideline for placement of students) in grades seven (down to 91%) and eight (down to 91%); the sixth-grade remained unchanged at 91% minority students. These percentages are based on September enrollment figures reported by the district's Admissions Office.

In the spring, nearly all of the teachers surveyed felt that student absences hindered their attempts to implement the theme to some degree. Daily attendance data were gather for several magnet middle schools at different months and days during the school year. Westport Middle had a relatively higher percentage of absences than the other middle schools examined. A third to half of Westport Middle students were absent all or part of the day, and around 15% were absent at least half of the day. Absenteeism at all middle schools increased as the school year progressed.

Teacher Perceptions and Concerns. Teachers were committed to the theme and to each other; believed strengths of the program were themselves, the theme, and the facility; were confident of their ability to infuse the theme; and were fairly satisfied with the magnet curriculum and student theme-related activities. There was more cohesion among the staff this year than previous years. Yet, there existed a strong undercurrent of frustration, especially with the leadership and student discipline problems. These concerns loom large and solutions must be found in order to retain a caring, dedicated staff at Westport Middle.

A national study of magnet schools found that educational quality was strongly related to three factors: 1) strong principal leadership, 2) curriculum, staff, and theme cohesion, and 3) district commitment and flexibility (Blank, Dentler, Baltzell, and Chabotar, 1983). Westport Middle has had a different principal every year of theme implementation. Clearly, for Westport Middle to become a successful magnet, the instability of leadership and continued disappointment of the staff in its leadership must be rectified. The concern with student discipline has been repeatedly voiced by the teachers at Westport Middle and reached a crescendo this year. It, also, must be addressed.

Access to supplies remained a concern of teachers. About half of the teachers stated in the spring survey that they didn't have access to the supplies and equipment needed to implement the theme. Scheduling problems adversely affected teachers and students throughout the year. A master schedule listing students' teachers and classes was not finalized until February, and this schedule was flawed. Several teachers identified an inefficient master schedule as an impediment to theme implementation. Both of these problems, access to supplies and scheduling, occurred last year as well (Seever, 1992) which exacerbated the aggravation this year.

Infusion of the theme was observed infrequently in core classrooms, although almost all of teachers felt they were able to infuse the theme into their classes. Several teachers expressed a desire for systematic review of the theme throughout the year, including the sharing of successful infusion strategies. Multicultural infusion was observed infrequently, also.

Theme Choice and Its Influence on Student Perceptions. For the current year, communications/writing was the first choice of magnet theme of only about one-fourth of parents. Yet, the majority of parents chose "theme" as the most important factor in their decision to send their child to Westport Middle. Less than a quarter of the students surveyed said "theme" was the most important factor in their decision to attend Westport Middle. These findings suggest that the theme was not the primary reason for being at Westport for most of the parents and students enrolled.

The lack of importance of the theme held by students was reflected in their perceptions of the theme. At best, about half to two-thirds were satisfied with the magnet program. Significantly, although students seemed rather ambivalent toward the theme, they valued education. In written responses to a question asking them what they would miss at school if they didn't go, two-thirds said "classes" or "an education." It is evident the students at Westport Middle recognized the importance of learning, although they yet lack the discipline to work at it.

Student Opportunities. Most of the theme strands were fully implemented this year. Video broadcasting and editing weren't implemented due to lack of needed equipment; the printing strand

wasn't implemented reportedly because the teacher didn't get the presses rolling in a timely manner. However, diverse opportunities were afforded to all students through curricular offerings. The responses to the student questionnaire suggests that writing experiences exceeded other types of communicating (e.g., oral/dramatic/graphic art) experiences. Indirect evidence supporting the emphasis on writing was obtained through responses to open-ended questions. Every student surveyed wrote something for each question and most wrote two or three sentences.

Importantly, classroom observations found that theme teachers infrequently relied upon work-sheets in their classes. Further, a teacher working directly with one student (1:1 instruction) comprised over two-thirds of theme and over one-fourth of core classroom time.

Gaining research skills as a tool to learning is an emphasis at Westport Middle and the majority of the students indicated they had researched a project and/or used the Learning Resource Center (LRC). However, observations of the LRC made during the year found students using the LRC for research less than a quarter of the time. Also, research activities were observed rarely in theme and core classrooms during the year. Nearly two-thirds of students said they had learned about career opportunities in communications and/or were involved in special activities that helped them think about their career.

Other theme implementation goals of Westport Middle are the development of critical thinking skills and exposure to diverse cultures. Neither achieved much success this year. Critical thinking, as measured in the classroom by student discussions and critiques, was observed rarely this year. Also, multicultural infusion, which included African-American culture, was observed infrequently. Notably, physical evidence of different cultures was present in almost half of all classrooms visited.

Student Relations and Safety. The majority of students felt positively about their teachers and felt that at least one teacher took a special interest in them. Of concern was student interpersonal relations. Less than a quarter of all students believed they got along well with each other or thought students were well behaved in class. A majority felt student behavioral problems interfered with learning in their classes. Students who thought student behavioral problems interfered with learning were asked to write how they would make classes better. Over two-thirds of those surveyed indicated that the teacher should exert more class control, including stronger discipline. Students also added that the disruptive students who didn't want to learn should be separated from those who did. It is clear that both students and teachers are calling for greater control and discipline within the classroom.

The feelings students described in their written comments were reflected in their perceptions of safety: only a small majority felt safe outside of the classroom and cafeteria. Of note, these are teacher-controlled areas, so students evidently felt relatively safe in their presence. Areas of greatest vulnerability were school grounds, school restrooms, and school halls. Until a multicultural curriculum teaching tolerance is implemented, extra security is warranted to relieve the potential threat to student well-being in those areas where they feel especially vulnerable.

Drop-out Risk. Slightly over one half of students had a parent, sibling or close friend who had dropped out of high school. The association poses a significant risk factor to the successful completion of high school for these students. A need to make a determined effort to reach these students is apparent, especially since only a few reported meeting with a counselor or teacher to talk about their future this year. Some of the shadow of risk of dropping out is dispelled by the positive sense of self-esteem the students expressed in response to this question, "If you could re-create yourself, how would you look?" Nearly half of those responding said they would look the same.

Parent Perceptions. The majority of parents were satisfied with the education provided, the teachers, the principal, and various communications from school. Overall parent satisfaction with Westport Middle had increased considerably since last year; satisfaction with teachers improved since theme implementation, also. Most notably, a higher percentage of parents expressed satisfaction with their child's progress in basic skills this year compared to last, especially math. Parent perceptions of progress in reading and writing improved as well. Parents recognized the value of effective communications and writing skills since nearly all believed the theme would improve their child's chances of getting a good job. Also, the majority of parents with sixth- and seventh-grade students planned to send their child to Westport Middle next year. Finally, half of the parents of eighth-grade students planned to send their child to Westport Communications Magnet High School next year. These high percentages indicated satisfaction with the theme even though two-thirds of parents surveyed said that communications/writing wasn't their first choice of theme.

Achievement. Westport Middle students scored below the KCMSD mean percentile scores and the national norms in the ITBS subtests of reading, language, and math across all grade levels. Generally, since magnet theme implementation in 1991, reading scores have risen or remained the same; language scores have declined, except for sixth-grade; math scores have declined, except for the seventh-grade. Comparing scores this year to 1992, percentile ranks of sixth-graders rose in reading, declined in language, and remained the same in math; seventh- and eighth-grade percentile ranks declined slightly in all subtests, except language (seventh-grade only).

Percentile ranks of a 1991 cohort of sixth-grade students who had been enrolled in the Westport Middle magnet program for three years revealed improved reading scores since sixth-grade, but language and math scores declined through the years. Non-minorities in the sixth-grade cohort scored above the national norms in reading, language, and math. Minority students in the cohort scored lower than those of non-minority students across all subtests.

On the MMAT, Westport Middle sixth-grade students had scores in English/language arts and math comparable to those of the district. Eighth-grade students were weak in English/language arts compared to the district, but were comparable in math.

Recommendations

1. *It is important for the Westport Middle School students, faculty and staff to have a supportive, capable administration.* The majority of teachers expressed considerable disappointment in the current leadership at Westport Middle. The school has had three principals in as many years, and the instability created by the turn-over has adversely effected theme implementation. Almost half of the teachers surveyed (42%) said a new principal was the most needed change at Westport Middle; only 29% felt communications with the principal were good; 37% felt the principal had provided the support they needed to implement the theme. Strong leadership would begin to eliminate the most critical problems confronting Westport Middle: discipline and safety, poor master schedule of student/teacher classes, teacher morale, and student attendance. The central office should provide whatever support is necessary to aid Westport in becoming a successful magnet school.
2. *Develop and implement a discipline policy appropriate to Westport Communications/Writing Middle School and continue efforts to ensure student, staff, and teacher safety.* A majority of both students and teachers felt discipline problems interfered with learning in the classroom. Nearly two-thirds of teachers felt discipline problems made it hard to implement the theme this year. Significantly, most of the students wanted the teachers to exert more class control and to remove disruptive students from the class. Most teachers characterized the leadership as unsupportive in their attempts to control and manage the classrooms, halls, and cafeteria. The majority of students and teachers didn't feel safe at school, and students felt especially vulnerable on school grounds, in the restrooms, and in the halls. The problems with discipline (and associated feelings of safety) occurred last year and require immediate solution.
3. *Building administration should ensure the LRC is easily accessible to all faculty and, with the input of the teachers, develop a plan for optimal use. Teachers and staff should strive to increase their use of the LRC by assisting the administration in developing a process and schedule of use.* Last year's recommendation, which was very similar to the above, was not met even though the principal was apprised of it at the beginning of the year. Most teachers did not use the LRC this year believing it to be inaccessible, difficult to schedule, and not amenable for class use. Classroom observations found minimal opportunities in research, which is part of the school's plan.

4. *Teachers should be provided relevant theme-centered in-service and instructional opportunities, especially designed to offer training in theme infusion.* Less than half of the teachers were satisfied with theme-related staff development during the year, and their satisfaction had deteriorated considerably over the years. Apparently, a recommendation made last year to provide teachers with more theme-centered training was not met. The need for effective staff develop is warranted since theme infusion was observed only 5% of the time in core classrooms. Also, building observations found little evidence of theme-related careers, which is part of the school's plan. Core teachers should be provided the support and encouragement to develop teaching strategies which better engage students and involve them in learning.
5. *The administration, instructional support staff, and teachers should study the results of the classroom observation data.* They should determine appropriate levels of theme infusion, multicultural infusion, instruction in critical thinking, and research activities, etc. Instruction in these areas are goals of the magnet program, but were observed only minimally this year. Building administration and instructional support staff should ensure that teachers have the necessary training to design teaching plans which met the goals of the school's magnet planning outline.
6. *Building administration should make an effort to make supplies, equipment, and materials easily accessible to teachers.* Many more teachers this year compared to last year stated they had received the supplies ordered the previous spring. Yet, almost half said they didn't have access to the materials needed to implement the theme. Improving access to supplies was recommended in last year's evaluation report, yet very little progress had been made.

Program Description

Essentially, the *Long-Range Plan* and the *Westport Middle School Communications/Writing Magnet Planning Outline* (Westport Middle School Communications/Writing Magnet Task Force, 1990) describe a three year program in communications/writing with 11 theme strands. These instructional strands are: text, creative writing/composition, dramatic arts, public speaking, journalism (print and broadcast), public/human relations, computer, commercial arts, and photography. Eighth-grade students are expected to focus on a particular area of communications in preparation for the high school communications magnet program. Also, the communications/ writing program at the middle school level is expected to provide a multicultural focus and have a strong research and applied learning orientation.

Westport Middle had a team teaching instructional approaching within a traditional middle school grade structure. The first period of every day was a Mentor period of about 30 minutes which provided students with home-work assistance and academic advisement. The time also allowed for the arrival of late buses and students, thereby reducing interruptions the first academic hour.

Sixth-graders spent second and third period in the same class, but devoted the first hour exclusively to reading.

Evaluation Design

The evaluation is facilitated through classroom observations and site visits, perception data gathered through interviews and survey instruments, and through data obtained from the district's Admissions, Research, and Testing offices. While the present report concentrates on the 1992-1993 school year, some data from 1990-1991 and 1991-1992 are included to show progress and change through time. Questions addressed in the summative evaluation were:

1. Has the school met established enrollment goals?
2. Was the program implemented as detailed in the *Long-Range Plan* and in the school's planning outline?
3. What are parent, student, teacher, and school leadership perceptions about and attitudes toward the program?
4. What are the levels of student achievement in the school?

Results

Enrollment

When placing students in magnet school, the Placement Office follows the admissions policies as described in the *Long-Range Plan* (Hale and Levine, 1986). These guidelines include the placement of six minority students for every four non-minority students. According to the admissions policies, "if applications of non-minority students run out, minority students will continue to be accepted until the program is filled or until the minority percentage reaches a maximum level of 2% lower than the minority percentage in that school in the preceding year" (Hale and Levine, 1986, p. 18). Historically, this 2% guideline has been applied at each grade level and for each magnet theme when the school houses more than one theme. If, on the other hand, "applications of minority students run out, non-minority students will continue to be accepted until the program is filled or the non-minority percentages reaches 50%" (Hale and Levine, 1986, p. 18). Enrollment data presented in this section are based on students who were actually enrolled on the last Wednesday in September as reported by the Research and Admissions Offices, and not on the number of students admitted; however, the enrollment data will be discussed using the admission guidelines as benchmarks for movement toward the desired desegregation of KCMSD schools.

Enrollment and racial composition data are presented for the first year of magnet school operations plus the year prior to implementing the communications/writing magnet program. The

year prior (1989-1990) is treated as the baseline year and gives perspective to the magnet year data. Minority and non-minority enrollment are reported by grade.

Enrollment data for the communications/writing middle school through three years of implementation (since 1990-1991), plus baseline year (1989-1990) are in Table 1. Westport Middle reduced minority enrollment by at least two percentage points from the year previous (which is the districts desegregation guideline for placement of students) in grades seven (down to 91%) and eight (down to 91%); the sixth-grade remained unchanged at 91% minority students.

Implementation

Program implementation was evaluated using diverse sources of school-based data: classroom and building observations, interviews, perception surveys, and attendance records. Observations were made in classrooms randomly selected from all available classrooms at the beginning of the school year, with adjustments made as demanded by schedule changes. Four classrooms were observed, each for 20 minutes, every week: two theme, one language arts, and one core (i.e., math, science, or social studies). Data regarding student activities, including research, and theme infusion were observed during each session. Infusion could be coded as occurring on the occasions the theme was being infused into core classrooms and in all classrooms when instruction was multicultural (e.g., topic involved some cultural or ethnic group, not necessarily racial group, other than mainstream White). The Learning Resource Center (LRC) was observed for use by students and teachers at least once a week throughout the year. In addition to these observations, implementation was evaluated through attendance records; interviews with school leadership; perception surveys of teachers, students and parents; and observations of physical evidence of the theme throughout the building.

Materials/supplies availability and facilities. The video broadcast studio wasn't completed this year. It lacked lights and cameras ordered at least two years ago; purchasing order and requestion errors created the delays, but the equipment is scheduled for installation prior to the beginning of the 1993-1994 school year. The editing studio lacked equipment, many computers weren't working, and one computer lab didn't have computers. The incomplete facilities prevented students from having hands-on experiences in video broadcasting and editing.

Teacher perceptions about materials/supplies and the facilities are presented in Table 2. When teachers were surveyed in the fall, the majority said they had received all the necessary copies of the primary (83%) and secondary or supplementary (93%) texts for their students (Table 2). Three-fourths had received the supplies ordered the previous spring, which represents a substantial

improvement from last year when only 48% said they had received ordered supplies. While the supplies/materials apparently had arrived this year, by the end of the year only 58% of teachers said they had access to the necessary equipment and supplies needed to implement the theme. This percentage differed markedly from the 80% who reported having access to needed equipment and supplies at the beginning of the year. A recommendation was made last year regarding improving teacher access to equipment (Seever, 1992), yet progress had not been made. In the spring survey, 12 teachers wrote comments detailing concerns with accessibility to theme-related materials, and four (33%) mentioned difficulty in gaining access to the needed materials. Increased availability of materials was identified by four (13%, n=31 comments) teachers as changes they would like to see in the magnet program at Westport Middle.

Access to the LRC was an issue for the teachers last year and the subject of an evaluation recommendation (Seever, 1992). The current administration was apprised of the concern during the fall interview. At that time, the principal said the LRC was available to the staff at all times and that the staff could schedule a time for class use. Teachers were asked in the fall of this year whether Westport Middle administration was making an effort to ensure that the LRC was easily accessible. Forty-seven percent felt at that time that an effort was being made. In the spring, teachers were asked about the adequacy and use by their students of the LRC (see Table 2): 76% believed the LRC was well equipped for the study of theme related issues, yet only 59% indicated their students used the LRC to at least some degree. Some teachers (17%, or two of 12 commenting on accessibility of materials) mentioned that it was difficult to hold class in the LRC and that access was limited.

The results of observations of the use of the LRC by students and teachers throughout the year are in Table 3. The LRC was observed on 37 separate occasions, representing 37 different weeks of the school year. Classes were using the LRC 35% of observations, with the language arts class the primary user. Research is a focus of the communications/writing curriculum, but students were observed using the LRC for research only 19% of visits. Teachers rarely used the LRC for personal use.

Both teacher report and observations revealed under-utilization of the LRC. Some teachers indicated accessibility to the facility was a deterrent to their use. Since research is a focus of the theme, improved access to and use of the LRC should be an administrative goal.

With the completion of the building just this year, a jump in teacher satisfaction with the facilities was anticipated. However, teacher satisfaction did not change from last year, with about three-

fourths both years saying they were either very satisfied or satisfied with the adequacy of the building in facilitating theme implementation.

Staff development/in-services. A recommendation made last year developed from teacher's indicating a desire for more relevant staff development and theme-centered in-service opportunities (Seever, 1992). Less than half (41%, Table 4) of the teachers this year were satisfied with the magnet theme staff development offered during the year. Last year, 73% of teachers indicated satisfaction with staff development and 61% were satisfied the year before that. It is obvious that staff development sessions have deteriorated in teachers' minds. Importantly, 88% said they were able to apply the information from theme-related summer in-service in their classrooms. Several teachers commented in the spring survey that they felt the theme was a strength of Westport and readily adaptable to most subject areas. Yet, several indicated a need for greater guidance in theme implementation from the administration and a desire for systematic review of the theme throughout the year. The latter would include teachers sharing successful infusion strategies and the encouragement in the use of new communications resources.

Staff. Construction of the new facility and renovations to the existing building were completed at the beginning of the current school year. The Annex, a separate facility needed the previous two years to accommodate the number of students, was not required; therefore, all staff, resources and students were contained in one building and in one location for the first time since theme implementation three years ago. Some staff changes occurred during the year, most importantly, the replacement of a writing resource teacher in January with the curriculum coordinator whose position was not filled. There were several new teachers this year, especially eighth-grade teachers. Yet, 61% of the teachers at Westport Middle had taught at the school every year of theme implementation. Turn-over had been a little more than one-third of the teaching staff during three years of theme implementation.

Significantly, Westport Middle has had three principals in three years of theme implementation. The current principal arrived at the end of the school year last year and school opened in August 1992 with the same principal it ended with last year. The instability created by the constant turn-over of school leadership has impacted successful theme implementation in ways that are difficult to measure, but that are readily discerned from staff perceptions (see **Teacher Perceptions** below).

Scheduling. There were scheduling problems which affected the school throughout the year. A master schedule listing students' teachers and classes was not finalized until February, and this schedule was still flawed. Nineteen percent of the teachers (n=seven of 36 responding) identified

an inefficient master schedule as an impediment to theme implementation. The problem occurred last year as well (Seever, 1992) which exacerbated the aggravation this year. Specifically, it reportedly took the team teachers four weeks at the beginning of the school year to ensure that all students were enrolled in the four core classes; the classroom observer could not rely upon the master schedule but had to check in at the office or with the curriculum coordinator each time; because the master schedule wasn't credible, office personnel were forced to call for students on the school-wide intercom which disrupted every class; in March, it took a teacher six tries to find a student, who eventually was found in a class that wasn't listed on her schedule. Over half of the teachers felt the communications/writing curriculum was well coordinated and logically sequential (61% from Table 4), but had failed the students because of scheduling problems.

Attendance. At the start of the year, almost three-fourths of the teachers felt Westport Middle had a plan to reduce student absenteeism and over two-thirds were satisfied that student absences were documented accurately. However, in the spring survey, 91% of teachers felt that student absences hindered their attempts to implement the theme to some degree (Table 4).

Daily attendance data were gather for several magnet middle schools at different months and days during the school year (Table 5). Comparative middle schools were selected at random. Enrollment data were obtained from the Research Office and Student Record System; the latter also supplied daily attendance data which was gathered and entered into the district database by each middle school. Only active enrollees were counted in both the enrollment and attendance files. The table shows Westport Middle to have a relatively higher percentage of absences than the other middle schools examined. A third to half of Westport Middle students were absent all or part of the day, and around 15% were absent at least half-day. The differences among middle schools were greatest for all or partial day absences and least when half-day absenteeism was considered. Westport Middle student absences of half-day or more approached that of the other middle schools. Absenteeism at all middle schools increased as the school year progressed.

Classroom observations. As described fully above, observations were 20 minutes in length and were conducted throughout the year in classrooms selected at random. Classroom observations provide the empirical data needed to reliably evaluate theme implementation. Throughout the year, 1272 minutes of theme classes (including language arts) and 400 minutes of core classes were observed for a total of 1672 minutes. The results of theme courses are presented in Table 6 and Figures 1, 2, and 3. The frequency of multicultural infusion in all classrooms is graphed in Figure 4. The observation results of core classrooms are in Table 7 and Figures 5, 6, and 7.

Three categories (excluding infusion which is discussed separately below) were observed in theme and core classes: theme topics, which includes the theme strands and research component, student activities (which includes hands-on and seat work), and interruptions. The subcategories, or topics and/or activities, included in each category and their frequency of occurrence are presented in each Table. These table should be reviewed with the awareness that there is no optimal amount of time for the incorporation of any activity into the classroom. Also, several activities could occur simultaneously during an observation minute and all would be recorded in that minute. A relative measure of the frequency of the occurrence of activities within a particular category is gained using a percentage of cumulative minutes rather than total observed minutes. In the figures, percentages derived from cumulative minutes, rather than percent of total observation minutes, are used.

Salient aspects of the theme classroom observations are (Table 6 and Figures 1 through 4):

1. an emphasis on writing, technology, and reading, which comprised nearly all theme topic observations (Figure 1). As the reader may recall, the broadcast studio was not completed due to purchasing order mistakes, so this strand couldn't be implemented. The industrial technology teacher charged with the printing strand reportedly didn't get the presses rolling during the year, so this stand wasn't implemented. Yet, print journalism strand was presented through a well-planned course in journalism, which also devoted considerable time and effort to all aspects of journalism not just the print medium;
2. the infrequency of research as an instructional tool (Figure 1);
3. the infrequency of "worksheet" as a student activity, which suggests Westport Middle theme teachers didn't resort to "busy-work" to keep their class occupied (Figure 2);
4. the variety of opportunities afforded students to experience and develop diverse theme skills (Figure 2);
5. the virtual absence of student discussion/critique which incorporates critical thinking skills (Figure 2);
6. the fact that 39% of teacher instruction was one-on-one (Figure 3);[1]
7. the infrequency of multicultural instruction (Figure 4).

Salient aspects of the core classroom observations are (Table 7 and Figures 4 through 7):

1. the minimal inclusion of multicultural instruction, although discussions of other cultures occurred in core classes to a greater frequency than in theme (Figure 4);
2. the paucity of infusion of theme topics into core classes (Table 7);

[1]Embedded within teacher instruction are student listen, student question/response, and student discussion, which are a continuum of possible responses to teacher instruction. During classroom observations, each minute coded as teacher instruction also coded one of the possible student responses. If a response wasn't coded, then instruction was 1:1. The number of minutes of 1:1 is the remainder after subtracting all minutes of student response from total minutes of teacher instruction.

3. the relatively frequent occurrence of reading and writing infusion among all theme topics observed (Table 7 and Figure 5);
4. the infrequency of research as an instructional tool and method of theme infusion (Figure 5). Yet, many students completed science fair projects which involved research methods;
5. the relatively frequent use of "worksheet" as a student activity (Figure 6);
6. the lack of student discussion/critique, although slightly more evident than in theme classes (Figure 6);
7. the fact that 29% of teacher instruction was one-on-one, yet much of this time occurred around worksheets (Figure 7).

Summarizing the classroom observation results, theme teachers should be praised for their instructional efforts, especially the emphasis placed on 1:1 teaching and avoidance of worksheets in theme classes. However, some areas require attention, both in instructional practices and curriculum, particularly the latter. The curriculum should be revised several ways: it must include diverse cultures and more experience gaining research skills. These areas were weakness observed at Westport Middle last year as well (Seever, 1992). Regarding instruction, students need more opportunities in the classroom for discussion and critique as these embody critical thinking abilities. Also, core teachers should be provided the training and support needed to infuse the theme. Many should be encouraged to develop alternative teaching strategies which better engage students in the learning process.

Infusion. Teacher perceptions of their ability to infuse the theme differed substantially from practice as observed in the classrooms. Ninety-three percent of teachers surveyed in the spring said they had been able to infuse the theme in the subject(s) they taught (Table 3). Yet, infusion of the theme was observed only 5% of the time in core classrooms (Table 7). In the spring survey, several teachers indicated a desire for systematic review of the theme throughout the year, which would include teachers sharing successful infusion strategies and encouragement in the use of new communication resources.

Evidence of theme. In the months of December and April, physical evidence of the magnet theme was documented at Westport Middle. One-hundred and two locations within the school, including classrooms, were visited (see Table 8). The observer noted such items as: student work, theme posters, equipment, books, writings, information about careers, and depictions of different cultures. In the classrooms, some of which accommodated both core and theme classes, 82% had visible evidence of the theme. Pictures/posters, books and writings comprised the majority of the material. Over half of the classrooms (53%) had multicultural evidence. However, only 7%

displayed theme-related careers. Across all sites, 80% had evidence of the theme; of these, 42% displayed student work and almost half (47%) included diverse cultures. Over half (57%) of other sites (e.g., cafeteria, hallways, art, music) in the building had theme-related evidence.

Perceptions

Teacher Perceptions. Teacher perceptions of the progress of magnet program implementation, staff relations, and student-centered issues were gathered through fall and spring questionnaires. In addition to defined response categories, teachers were given the opportunity to write comments with anonymity assured. Results of the spring questionnaire for the current year are in Table 4; where longitudinal data are available, trends in teacher perceptions through the years will be presented.

Generally, the teachers were committed to the theme and to each other; they believed strengths of the program were themselves, the theme, and the facility; they were confident of their ability to infuse the theme; and they were fairly satisfied with the magnet curriculum and student theme-related activities. There was more cohesion and cooperation among the staff, especially between theme and core, than found last year. Yet, there existed a strong undercurrent of frustration, especially with the principal and student discipline problems. These concerns loom large and solutions must be found in order to retain a caring, dedicated staff at Westport Middle. The frustrations were expressed in several ways as detailed below. Yet, most pointedly, 74% in the spring as compared to 93% in the fall said they felt professionally challenged teaching in the magnet theme, and high ratings of the school have declined through the years (43% of teachers rated the school "fair" or "poor" this year compared to 15% last year and 23% the year before). Teacher perceptions specific to the principal are:

1) 37% (Table 4) of teachers felt the principal had provided the support needed to successfully implement the magnet theme;
2) 29% felt there was good communication between themselves and the principal;
3) 75% felt communication problems among faculty/staff hindered their attempts to implement the theme to at least some degree;
4) 53% (n=19 of 36 respondents) wrote comments describing an ineffective principal and the lack of building level leadership in response to a question asking them to identify things that have made it hard to implement the theme this year. Comments representative of the impediment include:

   "Problems at Westport [Middle] include ineffective administration which carries through all areas including the magnet theme. The principal needs to decide that he is in charge - he has yet to do this and there are only 10 weeks left in school."

   "The administration. In almost all efforts which they undertake, they are inconsistent and unable to follow through to completion. ...Within this building they are serving

as a detriment not an asset. ...At no time throughout this year have I seen our administration complete a task to the standard that they expect of teachers."

"Principal has never taken over the top position at the school. ...he seems unable to control students or to provide leadership for adults."

"I feel that our principal...is extremely unsupportive.... I never get responses on notes, letters, or conference cards I send to our principal.";

5) 42% (n=13 of 30 respondents) of teachers identified the principal as a change they would like to see in the magnet program at Westport Middle School. Comments representative of this desired change include:

"We need a new principal. One that doesn't hide from work, getting involved, etc."

"We need a good, strong support staff - namely, a new principal."

"I would like to see stronger leadership."

"We need a principal who is theme knowledgeable and who is able and willing to take control."

The other major concern of teachers, the absence of an enforced discipline policy, is the province of Westport Middle administration, and reflects upon the leadership at the school. The concern with student discipline has been repeatedly voiced by the teachers at Westport and reached a crescendo this year. Considering teachers' concern with student discipline and the related issue of safety:

1) from Table 4, 98% (compared to 79% last year) said that discipline problems hindered their attempts to implement the theme at least to some degree;
2) 61% (n=22 of 36 respondents) wrote comments about student behavior and discipline in response to a question asking them to identify things that had made it hard to implement the theme this year. Comments representative of student discipline issues teachers identified as having made it hard to implement the theme this year include:

"General lack of discipline..."

"Discipline wavers with the weather - students are given a suspension then an administrator readmits the child or the child comes to school while on suspension and we are told to let them stay! The message we have sent to the students concerning discipline is anything goes! There is no consistent plan from the front office."

"Lack of building control, especially in the halls."

"Lack of discipline school-wide makes it hard for kids to focus on any academics. General 'mob rule' atmosphere at the school; no serious consequences for students who destroy the school (physically and academically)."

"Student discipline. Inconsistency in management and discipline of students.";

3) 26% (n=eight of 31 respondents) identified a strict code of discipline in response to a question asking for changes they would like to see in the magnet program;
4) only 45% (Table 4) felt safe by the end of the year which compares badly to the 88% who felt safe in the fall. Also, comparing this year to previous years is revealing:

68% felt safe last year and 75% felt safe the year before that which was the first year of theme implementation.

A suggestion which emerged from teacher responses to the question of identifying any changes they would like to see in the magnet program directly related to the concern with discipline: three teachers (10% of respondents) wanted more counselors actively working with students. Observations within classrooms and dialogues with students conducted by the evaluation office during the year at both Westport Middle and High school strongly supports the need for daily, in-depth guidance/psychological counseling for all students to help them learn to manage their behavior.

Student Perceptions. Twenty-six percent of students participated in a survey regarding their perceptions of the magnet program at Westport Middle. The students were selected from a random sample of English/language arts classes. The students were asked to respond "Yes" or "No" to a series of questions about the school, the theme, the teachers and staff, and relations with other students. Some questions were open-ended and every student wrote several sentences expressing their views and feelings. The results are presented in Table 9 for all students. For questions having longitudinal data available, trends in student perceptions through time are elucidated.

From Table 9, for most students the most important factor in their decision to enroll at Westport was either that their friends attended (29%) or they liked the school (27%). Only 19% chose " theme" as the most important factor in their decision to attend Westport Middle. This finding suggests that about 80% of the student population at Westport Middle were not enrolled principally because of the theme.

The lack of importance of the theme is reflected in students' perceptions of the theme. At best, about half to two-thirds were satisfied with the magnet program. For example, 68% indicated they were glad to be going to the communications/writing magnet, 70% liked learning about the theme, and 58% liked most of their theme classes. Notably, a higher percentage of students responded favorably to all but the latter this year as compared to last (68% currently compared to 59% last year and 60% the year before last were glad to go to a communications/writing magnet; 70% currently compared to 64% last year liked learning about the theme; 58% currently compared to 65% last year and 54% the year before last liked the theme classes). However, currently less than half of the students indicated they would someday like a job using communications/writing (48%) or felt the theme had increased their interest in school and classes (45%), and students were more negative about the benefits of the theme this year as compared to last (48% currently compared to

61% last year would like a job in communications; 45% currently compared to 53% last year felt the theme had increased their interest in school and classes).

Significantly, although students seemed not to highly regard the theme, they did value education. In written responses to a question asking them what they would miss at school if they didn't go, 67% (n=121 of the 181 responding) said "classes" or an "education." It is evident the students at Westport Middle recognized the importance of learning, although they yet lacked the discipline to work at it.

The majority of theme strands were fully implemented this year and diverse opportunities were afforded to all students through curricular offerings. The planning outline doesn't expect students to concentrate on a particular strand until the eighth-grade. Video broadcasting and editing weren't implemented due to lack of needed equipment; the printing strand wasn't implemented due to the teacher not getting the presses rolling in a timely manner. However, many opportunities were available to students in all grades, including after-school participation in theme clubs. Approximately 30 students were involved in either the Photography, Video, or Radio Club, and about 20-25 contributed to the student publication.

The responses to the student questionnaire suggests that writing experiences exceeded other types of communicating (e.g., oral/dramatic/graphic art) experiences. The volume of written responses to the survey strongly demonstrated how comfortable these students were with writing. Yet, perceived experiences within the (non-written) communication-oriented strands varied. For example, in the technical strands, more students felt they had theme-related opportunities to use a computer (91%) and camera and/or video equipment (63%) than to use recording/audio equipment (40%) and graphic arts (40%). More students thought they were involved in creative writing (poetry, short story, essay, skit, or play) projects (86%) as compared to journalistic (54%) efforts (news stories, features, editorial, or interviews). Fewer students felt they had the opportunity to communicate orally to a class (43%) as compared to written forms of communication just presented.

Generally, the responses indicate that a majority of students had classroom opportunities in theme-related activities while fewer felt they had participated in school productions (Figure 8). Also, the responses suggest that more students participated in writing types of productions (e.g, creative writing contests and contributing to publications) than oral communication types (e.g., play or skit and video or radio production). Finally, according to the planning outline, every student is supposed to write in every class and keep a journal, yet only 63% indicated they kept a journal this year.

Gaining research skills as a tool to learning is an emphasis at Westport Middle and, judging by students' perceptions, was well-implemented: 79% of the students indicated they had researched a project and 73% said they had used the LRC. Visits to the LRC and classroom observations, however, didn't match the students' perceptions of their research experience: only 19% of LRC visits found students using it for research purposes; research activities were observed only 2% of the time in theme and only 6% of the time in core classes. Students were exposed to the outside world in ways other than books: 75% of students indicated they had opportunities to watch outside professionals speak or perform.

Nearly two-thirds of students said they had learned about career opportunities in communications and/or were involved in special activities that helped them think about their career. Yet, evidence of theme-related careers was found in only 7% of core classrooms. Also, only 19% stated they had met with counselors or teachers this year to develop a plan for their future. Westport Middle has a Mentor Period the first hour of every school day to "help children realize their individual and collective worth" (Westport Middle School Communications/Writing Magnet Task Force, 1990 p. 2). Developing a plan for their future might be a worthwhile endeavor at some point during that period.

Considering student perceptions of the teachers and staff (Table 9), the majority felt positively about their teachers (67% currently compared to 69% last year) and even more felt that at least one teacher took a special interest in them (84%). The latter represents an improvement from last year when 72% of students felt at least one of their teacher took a special interest. A smaller percentage of students felt their counselors (49%) and the principal (58%) cared about them (Table 9). Of note, 22% of students wrote "teachers" when asked what they would miss at school if they didn't go to school. This, the third most frequent response, compares favorably with the two most frequently given responses which were "friends" (52%) and "classes" or an "education" (67%).

Of concern was student interpersonal relations, and these perceptions hadn't improved from the past two years. Less than a quarter of all students (Table 9) believed they got along well with each other (20%, down from 22% both of the previous two years) or thought students were well behaved in class (14%, down from 15% last year). A majority (70%, up from 60% last year) felt student behavioral problems interfered with learning in their classes. Students were asked to write why they thought students didn't get along well with one another, and 147 offered written explanations (77% of the total taking the survey, or all but 3% of those responding negatively). Of those responding in writing, 56% said "fights" and another 16% said students just didn't like each

other. Reasons students offered for fights varied, but the most frequently given was "he say, she say" (19% of respondents). Boy/girl conflicts (9%) and jealousy (9%) were other frequently mentioned reasons. Race was mentioned by only 2% (n=three) of the responding students. Gangs were identified as a source of poor relations by 19% (n=28) of the students. Finally, 12% of students wrote having a "bad attitude" prevented them from getting along with one another. These are representative comments offered by the students:

> "Because they don't agree on things and they get in fights."
>
> "Because they fight over stupid stuff like a boy, or he say, she say stuff."
>
> "Because people have attitudes with each other."
>
> "The students here are jealous of one another."
>
> "Because they too busy trying to be in a gang and one trying to be harder that the other."

Students who thought student behavioral problems interfered with learning were asked to write how they would make classes better. One-hundred and thirty-two (69% of those surveyed, or all but 1% of those responding positively) offered comments. The overwhelming response was for the teacher to exert more class control, including stronger discipline (51%, n=67 of respondents). Another 27% added that the disruptive students who didn't want to learn should be separated from those who did. These are representative comments:

> "I think they do because they take away from my learning because the teachers have to stop and deal with the student."
>
> "I think we could get strict teachers so that they won't try to run over them."
>
> "By stricter rules and sending students with behavior problems to alternative schools."
>
> "First, I would separate all the people who want to learn in one class and all the people who don't in another."
>
> "Put the bad people out and it will be okay."

The feelings students described in their own words above were reflected in their perceptions of safety: only a small majority felt safe outside of the classroom and cafeteria. Of note, these are teacher-controlled areas, so students evidently felt relatively safe in their presence. Areas of vulnerability were school grounds (51% did not feel safe), school restrooms (48% did not feel safe), and school halls (43% did not feel safe). With about a half of the students not feeling safe in some areas, extra security is warranted to relieve the potential threat to student well-being.

Slightly over one half of the students (52%) had someone close to them (a parent, sibling or close friend) who had dropped out of high school (Table 9). Last year the percentage was 47%. The association poses a substantial risk factor to the successful completion of high school for these students (Fine, 1991). A need to make a determined effort to reach these students is apparent, especially since only 19% reported meeting with a counselor or teacher to talk about their future this year. Some of the shadow of risk of dropping out is dispelled by the positive sense of self-esteem the students expressed in response to this question, "If you could re-create yourself, how would you look?" Nearly half of those responding (43%, n=75) said they would look the same, they would not change themselves. This is a respectable figure since 92% of the students surveyed wrote comments to this question (n=175 of 191 surveyed). Even though many liked the way they were, 54% indicated they wouldn't mind some physical change, such as "more muscles"; "longer" or "prettier" hair; "better looking"; "slimmer"; etc. (some included a physical change before or after saying they liked the way they were). A healthy 15% wanted to be smarter, 13% wanted a better attitude, and 8% would like to do better at school. These are representative comments:

"Like I do now."

"I am happy just the way I am."

"I will look cute and have nice clothes, shoes, long hair. Dress nice and look nice."

"Change my shoe size. More muscular. Light brown eyes. Different nose. Better clothes."

"I would be the same except a little smarter and a little more hair."

"If I could recreate myself I would be a better learner."

"I would not change myself but my attitude."

"I wouldn't change my looks or my personality but I would change my attitude. How my temper works and I would make myself better."

Parent Perceptions. A 10% sample of parents of students attending the communications/writing middle school the current year were randomly selected for telephone interview. Seventy-four parents responded to questions about the theme, school, and transportation (Tables 10, 11, 12, and Appendix A, respectively). Ninety-three percent were parents of minority students and 7% were non-minority parents. Some questions were asked in years previous and, if present, trends in parent perceptions since theme implementation are reported.

For the current year, communications/writing was the first choice of 23% of parents; 77% of parents would have preferred another theme for their child and 31% of these preferred the Computers Unlimited theme (Table 10). These findings suggest that only about one-fourth of parents gave

Westport Middle Communications/Writing as their first choice of theme for their middle school child.

Three reasons parents indicated as most important in their decision to send their child to Westport Middle were 1) the theme (62%), 2) Project Choice (36%), and 3) child attended last year and wanted to return (32%) (Table 10). This represents strong support for implementation of the theme at Westport Middle since only 23% indicated they choose communications/ writing among all themes available. When asked which among the list provided was the most important when deciding to send their child to Westport Middle, 27% of parents stated theme and 15% closeness to home.

Parents were asked what would be important to them when choosing a *school* for their child today (Table 10). A building in good condition was picked by the greatest majority of parents (93%), with liking the theme a very close second at 92%. The neighborhood around the school was indicated as important by 84% of parents. About three-fourths of parents gave closeness to home (78%), fewer students in the classroom (77%), and extra-curricular activities (74%) as important in their choice of school. Desegregation at a school held the least relevance with only 62% of parents stating racial mix would be important in choosing a school. Of the list provided, the reason most important to the majority of parents in choosing a school was theme (25%); closeness to home was preferred by 19% of parents. Forty-three of the 74 parents surveyed offered other factors as important in their choice of school: 27 (63%) stated that "good", "caring", "qualified" teachers would be most important to them in choosing a school for their child.

Considering parent perceptions of Westport Middle and the theme, regardless of how their child got there, the majority of parents were satisfied with the education provided, the teachers, the principal, and various communications from school (Table 11). Overall satisfaction with Westport Middle had increased considerably since last year (from 78% in Spring 1992 to 90% currently); satisfaction with teachers improved since theme implementation, also (89% in Spring 1991, 86% in Spring 1992, and 94% currently). Most notably, a higher percentage of parents expressed satisfaction with their child's progress in basic skills this year compared to last, especially math (from 58% in Spring 1992 to 84% currently). Parent perceptions of progress in reading (from 70% in Spring 1992 to 88% currently) and writing (from 79% in Spring 1992 to 83% currently) improved as well. Parents recognized the value of effective communications and writing skills since 92% believed the theme would improve their child's chances of getting a good job. Also, 82% of sixth- and seventh-grade students planned to send their child to Westport Middle next year, which represents an increase from last year (72%). Finally, a higher percentage of parents believed their

child was safe at Westport Middle this year as compared to years previous (65% in Spring 1991, 69% in Spring 1992, and 77% currently).

Parents expressed satisfaction with the school generally and with the education being provided. In addition to the above, for example, about half had contacted the school with a concern or problem (Table 12), and nearly three-fourths were satisfied with the way their concern was handled. Furthermore, parent responses suggest that more parents would be willing to help with school activities than had been asked. However, parent satisfaction with the theme was not as strongly expressed as indicated by their responses to certain questions in Table 11. For example, only half of the parents of eighth-grade students planned for their child to go to Westport High Communications next year (question 14), and 39% of parents of all students planned for their child to continue the theme at Westport High across the street (question 17). Possible explanations for the abandonment of the theme were discussed above in theme choice (e.g., Westport Middle communications/ writing was not the first choice for three-fourths of parents) and may be suggested further in Table 11 by the responses to question 9: increased interest of their child in school classes due to the theme was perceived by only 68% of parents, which represents a drop from last year (73%). These concerns probably contribute to the lack of theme loyalty into high school. Yet, as noted above, 92% of parents (a 6% increase from last year) believed that the theme would improve their child's chances of getting a good job. It seems parents valued the theme content, but perhaps not as highly as other themes offered by the district.

Achievement

ITBS. A summary of Westport Middle and district test scores for spring 1990 through 1993 are presented in Table 13 as percentile ranks. Percentile ranks were derived from conversion of mean grade equivalent scores, with the national norm lying at the 50th percentile. Scores in the subtests of reading, language, and math are presented by grade for minority and non-minority students.

An examination of the table shows that Westport students scored below the KCMSD mean percentile scores and the national norms in reading, language, and math across all grade levels. Non-minority students out-performed minority students in every subtest across all grade levels. Generally, since magnet theme implementation in 1991, reading scores have risen or remained the same; language scores have declined, except for sixth-grade; math scores have declined, except for the seventh-grade. Comparing the total group scores this year to 1992, percentile ranks of sixth-graders rose in reading, declined in language, and remained the same in math; seventh- and eighth-grade percentile ranks declined slightly in all subtests, except language (seventh-grade only).

Percentile ranks of a 1991 cohort of sixth-grade students (N=132, 91% of whom were minority students) who have been enrolled at the Westport Middle magnet program for three years are presented in Figures 9, 10, and 11 for reading, language, and math, respectively. Reading scores for the total cohort rose since sixth-grade, but scores declined in language and math through the years. Non-minorities (n=10) in the sixth-grade cohort scored above the national norms in reading, language, and math. Minority students in the cohort had scores lower than those of non-minority students across all subtests.

MMAT. Table 14 presents the MMAT scores for Westport Middle and the KCMSD for the current year (State of Missouri MMAT scores were not available at this writing). According to the *MMAT Guide to Score Interpretation and Use* (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 1990), meaningful strengths or weaknesses between groups can be assessed using the average student error of measurement of 25. This criterion suggests that Westport Middle sixth-grade students had scores comparable to those of the district in English/language arts and math. Eighth-grade students were weak in English/language arts compared to the district, but were comparable in math.

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Table 1

Westport Communications/Writing Middle School

Minority & Non-Minority Enrollment

September 1989 through 1993

	1989 - 1990				1990 - 1991				1991 - 1992				1992 - 1993			
	Min.		Non-Min.		Min.		Non-Min.		Min.		Non-Min.		Min.		Non-Min.	
Grade	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
6	234	96%	11	4%	212	88%	29	12%	259	91%	26	9%	250	91%	25	9%
7	268	93%	21	7%	222	94%	13	6%	210	93%	17	7%	227	91%	22	9%
8	241	90%	27	10%	204	92%	18	8%	199	97%	6	3%	194	91%	19	9%
Total	743	93%	59	7%	638	91%	60	9%	668	93%	49	7%	671	91%	66	9%
Grand Total	**802**				**698**				**717**				**737**			

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percent. Enrollment data from *September 27, 1989 Student Membership* (Research Office, 1989.), *September 26, 1990 Student Membership* (Research Office, 1990), *September 25, 1991 Student Census Count* (Admissions Office, 1991), and *September 30, 1992 Student Census Count* (Admissions Office, 1992).

Table 2

Westport Communications/Writing Middle School
Teacher Questionnaire (N=47) Responses to Materials and Facility Use Items
Spring 1993

Statement	Response Alternatives	N[1]	Percent
*1. I have the necessary copies of the primary texts for all students in my classroom.	Yes	49	83%
	No	10	17%
*2. I have the necessary copies of any secondary or supplementary texts I ordered.	Yes	53	93%
	No	4	7%
*3. I have received the supplies I ordered for my classrooms last spring.	Yes	43	75%
	No	14	26%
4. How satisfied have you been with the adequacy of the Westport Middle School's building in facilitating theme implementation?	Very satisfied	11	25%
	Satisfied	22	50%
	Dissatisfied	7	16%
	Very dissatisfied	4	9%
5. I have access to the necessary equipment and supplies I need to implement the magnet theme in the subjects I teach.	Yes	26	58%
	No	19	42%
*6. An effort is being made by Westport Middle School administration to ensure that the Learning Resource Center is easily accessible to all faculty this year.	Yes	27	47%
	No	31	53%
7. I believe the Learning Resource Center is well equipped for study of theme related issues by students and/or faculty.	Yes	32	76%
	No	10	24%
8. To what degree during the year do your students use the Learning Resource Center for study of theme-related issues?	To a great degree	1	2%
	To a good degree	4	9%
	To some degree	22	48%
	Not at all	19	41%

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

[1] Responses reflect only those teachers who expressed an opinion.

* Question was asked on teacher (N=60) survey administered in late fall, 1992.

Table 3

WestportCommunications/Writing Middle School
Use of Learning Resource Center (N=37 observations)

Use	Frequency of Use	Percentage of Observations
Class Using LRC		
Language Arts	7	19%
Theme	2	5%
Core	4	11%
None	24	65%
Student Activity		
Research	7	19%
Study	5	14%
None	25	68%
Teacher Activity		
Personal Use	1	3%
With Students	1	3%
None	35	95%

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percent.

Table 4

Westport Communications/Writing Middle School
Teacher Questionnaire (N=47) Responses to Perception Items
Spring 1993

Statement	Response Alternatives	N[1]	Percent
1. I am able to apply information from summer staff development in my classroom.	Yes	52	88%
	No	7	12%
2. I am satisfied with the magnet theme staff development during the school year.	Yes	18	41%
	No	26	59%
3. In general, my students participated in enough field experiences (field trips, activities, etc.) related to the theme?	Yes	20	51%
	No	19	49%
4. How satisfied have you been with the quality of your students' field trips?	Very satisfied	8	20%
	Satisfied	23	58%
	Dissatisfied	8	20%
	Very dissatisfied	1	3%
5. The resource teachers have provided the support I need to successfully implement the magnet theme.	Yes	23	55%
	No	19	45%
6. The curriculum coordinator has provided the support I need to successfully implement the magnet theme.	Yes	29	76%
	No	9	24%
7. The vice-principals have provided the support I need to successfully implement the magnet theme.	Yes	26	62%
	No	16	38%
8. The principal has provided the support I need to successfully implement the magnet theme.	Yes	15	37%
	No	26	63%
9. There is good communication between teachers and the principal.	Yes	12	29%
	No	29	71%
10. There is good communication between teachers and the vice-principals.	Yes	27	60%
	No	18	40%
11. There is good communication between teachers and resource teachers.	Yes	26	59%
	No	18	41%
12. There is good communication between teachers and other teachers.	Yes	37	82%
	No	8	18%
13. There is good communication between teachers and students.	Yes	28	64%
	No	16	36%
14. There is good communication between teachers and parents.	Yes	26	59%
	No	18	41%
15. To what degree do discipline problems hinder your attempts to implement the theme?	To a great degree	28	64%
	To a good degree	7	16%
	To some degree	8	18%
	Not at all	1	2%
16. To what degree do communication problems among faculty/staff hinder your attempts to implement the theme?	To a great degree	7	16%
	To a good degree	9	20%
	To some degree	17	39%
	Not at all	11	25%

Table 4 (continued)

Westport Communications/Writing Middle School
Teacher Questionnaire (N=47) Responses to Perception Items
Spring 1993

Statement	Response Alternatives	N[1]	Percent
17. To what degree does low and/or irregular student attendance hinder your attempts to implement the theme.	To a great degree	16	36%
	To a good degree	11	25%
	To some degree	13	30%
	Not at all	4	9%
18. The communications/writing curriculum appears to be well coordinated and logically sequential.	Yes	23	61%
	No	15	39%
19. I have been able to infuse the magnet theme into the subject(s) I teach.	Yes	43	93%
	No	3	7%
20. I feel professionally challenged teaching in the communications/writing program.	Yes	31	74%
	No	11	26%
21. Westport Middle is doing a good job developing student's self-esteem through opportunities provided in the classroom for self-expression.	Yes	18	49%
	No	19	51%
22. I feel physically safe teaching at Westport Middle.	Yes	20	45%
	No	24	55%
23. How would you characterize your commitment to the theme?	Yes	40	91%
	No	4	9%
24. Overall, what rating would you give to Westport Middle School this year?	Excellent	0	0%
	Good	12	27%
	Average	13	30%
	Fair	14	32%
	Poor	5	11%

Note: Percentages were rounded to the nearest whole percent.

[1] Responses reflect only those teachers who expressed an opinion.

• Question asked on teacher (N=60) survey administered in late fall, 1992.

Table 5
Westport Communications/Writing Middle School
Attendance 1992-1993[1]

School/Theme	% Absent All or Part of Day	% Absent at Least Half Day
Wednesday, September 30, 1992[2]		
Westport Mid CWR	33%	13%
KCMSA	20%	7%
Nowlin ENS	25%	12%
Lincoln SCM	15%	7%
King LGR	17%	6%
Wednesday, December 16, 1992[3]		
Westport Mid CWR	34%	16%
KCMSA	31%	12%
Nowlin ENS	30%	14%
Lincoln SCM	12%	6%
King LGR	22%	8%
Friday, March 5, 1993[4]		
Westport Mid CWR	50%	18%
KCMSA	31%	15%
Nowlin ENS	43%	15%
Lincoln SCM	24%	11%
King LGR	28%	13%
Tuesday, April 20, 1993[5]		
Westport Mid CWR	52%	19%
KCMSA	36%	16%
Nowlin ENS	33%	18%
Lincoln SCM	28%	14%
King LGR	30%	14%

Note: Percentages were rounded to the nearest whole percent.

[1] All attendance data from KCMSD Student Record System, a school-generated daily attendance report. Only ACTIVE enrollees were counted.

[2] Total enrollment data from September, 1992 Student Census Count (Research Office, 1992).

[3] Total enrollment data from January, 1993 Student Census Count (Research Office, 1993).

[4] Total enrollment data from KCMSD Student Record System in March, 1993 and are ACTIVE enrollees.

[5] Total enrollment data from KCMSD Student Record System in April, 1993 and are ACTIVE enrollees.

Table 6

WestportCommunications/Writing Middle School
Observation of Theme Classes (N=1272 Minutes)

Category	Minutes Observed	% of 1272 Min.[1]	% of Cumulative Min.[2]
Topic			
Reading	235	19%	20%
Writing	466	37%	40%
Technology	286	23%	25%
Print Journalism	40	3%	3%
Broadcast Journalism	52	4%	4%
Research	20	2%	2%
Multicultural Infusion	62	5%	5%
Cumulative Minutes of Topic	1161		
Student Activity			
Project	86	7%	3%
Production	128	10%	5%
Write/Compose/Edit	257	20%	10%
Speak	55	4%	2%
Equipment	154	12%	6%
Computer	158	12%	6%
Worksheets	231	18%	9%
Read	74	6%	3%
Listen (outside of Teacher Instruct)	63	5%	3%
Teacher Instruct	808	64%	32%
Student Listen	207	16%	8%
Student Question/Respond	273	22%	11%
Student Discuss/Critique	15	1%	1%
Cumulative Minutes of Student Activity[2]	2509		
Interruption			
Announcement	30	2%	
Discipline	42	3%	

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percent.

[1] Percentages within each category do not sum to 100% because a topic or activity within a category may not occur, or may occur, simultaneously with another event during an observation minute. All observed events were scored during an observation minute.

[2] Sum of all minutes observed within a category. Cumulative minutes may exceed total observed minutes (e.g., 1011) since events often occurred simultaneously within an observation minute, and all were scored.

Table 7

WestportCommunications/Writing Middle School
Observations of Core Classes (N=400 Minutes)

Category	Minutes Observed	% of 400 Min.[1]	% of Cumulative Min.[2]
Topic			
Reading	32	8%	68%
Writing	7	2%	15%
Technology	4	1%	9%
Print Journalism	0	0%	0%
Broadcast Journalism	1	<1%	2%
Research	3	1%	6%
Cumulative Minutes of Topic	47		
Infusion			
Of Theme	20	5%	
Multicultural infusion	26	7%	
Student Activity			
Project	17	4%	2%
Production	0	0%	0%
Write/Compose/Edit	2	1%	<1%
Speak	0	0%	0%
Equipment	37	9%	5%
Worksheets	132	33%	19%
Read	39	10%	6%
Listen (outside of Teacher Instruct)	12	3%	2%
Teacher Instruct	262	66%	38%
Student Listen	59	15%	9%
Student Question/Respond	113	28%	16%
Student Discuss/Critique	15	4%	2%
Cumulative Minutes of Student Activity[2]	688		
Interruption			
Announcement	14	4%	
Discipline	9	2%	

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percent.

[1] Percentages within each category do not sum to 100% because a topic or activity within a category may not occur, or may occur, simultaneously with another event during an observation minute. All observed events were scored during an observation minute.

[2] Sum of all minutes observed within a category. Cumulative minutes may exceed total observed minutes (e.g., 1011) since events often occurred simultaneously within an observation minute, and all were scored.

Table 8

WestportCommunications/Writing Middle School
Physical Evidence of Theme

Location	Evidence Present	
	N	Percent
Classrooms	55	82%
Theme picture/posters		49%
Theme news/magazine clippings		11%
Theme equipment		0%
Theme photographs		2%
Theme writings		36%
Theme books		40%
Theme careers		7%
Multicultural		53%
Other Sites[1]		
Theme evidence	28	57%
Multicultural		29%
All Sites[2]		
Theme evidence	102	80%
Multicultural		47%

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percent.

[1] Cafeteria, hallways, and support classrooms (e.g., art, music, etc.).

[2] Classrooms, other sites, including theme rooms.

Table 9

Westport Communications/Writing Middle School
Student Perceptions (N=191), Spring 1993

Statements	N[1]	Yes	No
~~1. I am glad I go to a Communications/Writing Magnet School.~~	~~189~~	~~68%~~	~~32%~~
2. I like learning about Communications/Writing.	189	70%	30%
3. Someday I would like a job that lets me use communications/ writing.	188	48%	52%
4. I am learning about other races and cultures.	187	66%	34%
5. The students at my school get along well with each other.	189	20%	80%
6. I think the students at my school are well behaved in class.	190	14%	86%
7. I think student behavior problems interfere with learning in my classes.	190	69%	31%
8. I feel safe:			
a. in classrooms.	185	74%	26%
b. in school restrooms.	187	52%	48%
c. in school halls.	187	57%	43%
d. in the school cafeteria.	187	67%	33%
e. on school grounds.	189	49%	51%
9. I think my teachers care about me.	190	67%	33%
10. I feel that at least one of my teachers takes a special interest in me.	190	84%	16%
11. I think my principal cares about me.	172	58%	42%
12. I think my counselor cares about me.	174	49%	51%
13. I like most of my classes.	191	69%	31%
14. I like most of my Communications/Writing classes.	189	58%	42%
15. I have talked with my family about my plans after high school.	191	67%	33%
16. I have a parent, brother, sister, or close friend who dropped out of school.	190	52%	48%
17. The Communications/Writing theme has increased my interest in school and classes.	189	45%	55%
18. I have had an opportunity this year to:			
a. use a camera/video equipment.	189	63%	37%
b. use recording/audio equipment.	190	39%	61%
c. use a computer.	191	91%	9%
d. write a news story, feature, editorial, or interview.	190	54%	46%
e. write a poem, short story, essay, skit, or play.	190	86%	14%
f. research a project.	191	79%	21%
g. use the Learning Resource Center.	191	73%	27%
h. present a speech in class.	191	43%	57%
i. use/produce graphic art(s).	191	40%	60%
j. to watch outside professionals speak or perform in communications/writing.	190	75%	25%
k. learn about career opportunities in communications/ writing.	190	67%	33%

Table 9 (continued)

Westport Communications/Writing Middle School
Student Perceptions (N=191), Spring 1993

Statements	N[1]	Yes	No
19. During the school year, I have participated in a:			
a. play or skit.	191	19%	81%
b. video/radio production.	190	29%	71%
c. creative writing contest.	190	27%	73%
d. publication (contributing either writings, graphics, photographs, or technical help).	191	33%	67%
20. I have kept a journal this year.	190	63%	37%
21. Special activities at school have helped me think about my career.	190	65%	35%
22. I have met with counselors or teachers this year to develop a plan for my future.	190	19%	81%
23. The following was MOST important in the decision to come to this school:[2]			
a. I liked the theme.	37	19%	–
b. I liked the school.	52	27%	–
c. My friends go here.	55	29%	–
d. It's near my home.	26	14%	–

[1] Responses reflect only the students who expressed an opinion.

[2] Twenty-one (11%) gave other reasons for enrolling in Westport Middle School.

Table 10

Westport Communications/Writing Middle School
Parent Perceptions: Theme Choice (N=74), Spring 1993

Question	N[1]	Percent "Yes"
1. If you could pick any magnet theme, which theme would you choose for your child?		
CMP	23	31%
COM	17	23%
SCM	16	22%
VPA and CPT	5 ea	7 % ea
CLG	3	4%
FLN (Spanish)	2	3%
ENS and AAS	1	1% ea
2. Which of the following were important to you when deciding to send your child to Westport Middle:[2]		
a. liked theme.	74	62%
b. WMS is close to home.	74	27%
c. like the surrounding neighborhood.	74	24%
d. Communications/Writing theme was second choice, first choice was not available.	74	22%
e. child attended last year and wanted to return.	74	32%
f. you have other children at WMS.	73	15%
g. assigned by district as other theme choices were not available.	73	18%
h. assigned by district as you did not apply for a theme.	73	4%
i. like the racial mix at WMS.	73	12%
j. Project Choice.	73	36%
3. If you were choosing a school for your child today, please tell me what would be important to you? Would you choose a school because:		
a. the school is close to home.	73	78%
b. you like the neighborhood around the school.	73	84%
c. you like the theme.	73	92%
d. the school has extra-curricular activities.	73	74%
e. there are fewer students in a classroom.	73	77%
f. you like the racial mix at the school.	73	62%
g. the building is in good condition.	73	93%

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percent.

[1] Responses reflect only those parents who expressed an opinion.

[2] Parents could respond positively to more than one of the reasons offered.

Table 11

Westport Communications/Writing Middle School

Parent Perceptions: Satisfaction with School and Theme (N=74), Spring 1993

Question	N[1]	Yes	No
1. Are you satisfied with the education your child is receiving in the Communications/Writing theme?	74	81%	19%
2. Are you satisfied with the education your child is receiving in reading?	71	83%	17%
3. Are you satisfied with the education your child is receiving in writing?	74	88%	12%
4. Are you satisfied with the education your child is receiving in math?	74	84%	16%
5. Are you satisfied with your child's teachers?	70	94%	6%
6. Are you satisfied with the leadership the principal provides?	64	92%	8%
7. Are the newsletters, phone calls, and notes from your child's school helpful?	73	90%	10%
8. Overall, do you like Westport Middle School?	71	90%	10%
9. Do you think the Communications/Writing theme has caused your child to have more interest in school classes?	72	68%	32%
10. Do you believe the Communications/Writing theme will improve your chid's chances of getting a good job?	64	92%	8%
11. Do you feel your child is safe at Westport Middle School?	70	77%	23%
12. Would you recommend Westport Middle School to other parents?	71	82%	18%
13. Do you plan to send your child to Westport Middle School next year.[2]	49	82%	18%
14. Do you plan to send your child to Westport Communications High School next year?[3]	16	50%	50%
15. Has the child's parent, brother, or sister dropped out of high school?	74	11%	89%
16. Have you and your child discussed where he/she will attend high school?	73	60%	40%
17. If so to above, what high school are you planning to attend?			
Westport COM	17	39%	
Westport BUS	8	18%	
Central CMP	8	18%	
Lincoln College Prep.	5	11%	
Paseo VPA	2	5%	
Metro AVT	2	5%	
East AGB	1	2%	
Southeast HPR	1	2%	

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percent.

[1] Responses reflect only those parents who expressed an opinion.

[2] Asked of parents with 6th & 7th grade students only.

[3] Asked of parents with 8th grade students only.

Table 12

Westport Communications/Writing Middle School
Parent Perceptions: Contact With School (N=74), Spring 1993

Question	Response	N[1]	Percent
1. Have you contacted the school this year with a concern or problem?	Yes	35	47%
	No	39	53%
2. If yes to above question, were you satisfied with the way your concern was handled?	Yes	26	74%
	No	9	26%
3. This year, how often have you been contacted and asked to help with a school activity?	Frequently	7	9%
	Once or twice	27	36%
	Never	40	54%
4. During a school year, how often would you like to be asked to help with school activities?	Frequently	13	18%
	Once or twice	35	47%
	Never	26	35%

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percent.

[1] Responses reflect only those parents who expressed an opinion.

Table 13

Westport Communications/Writing Middle School
Iowa Tests of Basic Skills Reading, Language, and Math
Spring 1990, 1991, 1992 and 1993

Grade / Ethnicity	Reading					Language					Math				
	1990[1]	1991	1992	1993	Dist. 1993	1990	1991	1992	1993	Dist. 1993	1990	1991	1992	1993	Dist. 1993
Sixth															
Minority	25	26	30	29	31	34	36	34	39	37	26	26	28	28	30
Non-Minority	33	42	48	42	50	44	50	45	43	49	35	43	40	40	48
Total	25	28	32	30	36	35	38	35	39	40	26	28	29	29	35
Seventh															
Minority	29	30	29	31	32	37	38	35	37	37	24	25	21	28	27
Non-Minority	32	30	49	37	51	41	47	54	45	52	37	39	38	46	48
Total	29	30	31	32	37	37	38	36	37	40	24	26	32	30	32
Eighth															
Minority	32	33	30	33	35	40	39	41	35	40	36	28	27	24	28
Non-Minority	37	30	49	40	50	44	49	70	47	51	44	36	41	46	45
Total	33	33	31	33	38	40	39	42	36	42	36	28	28	26	32

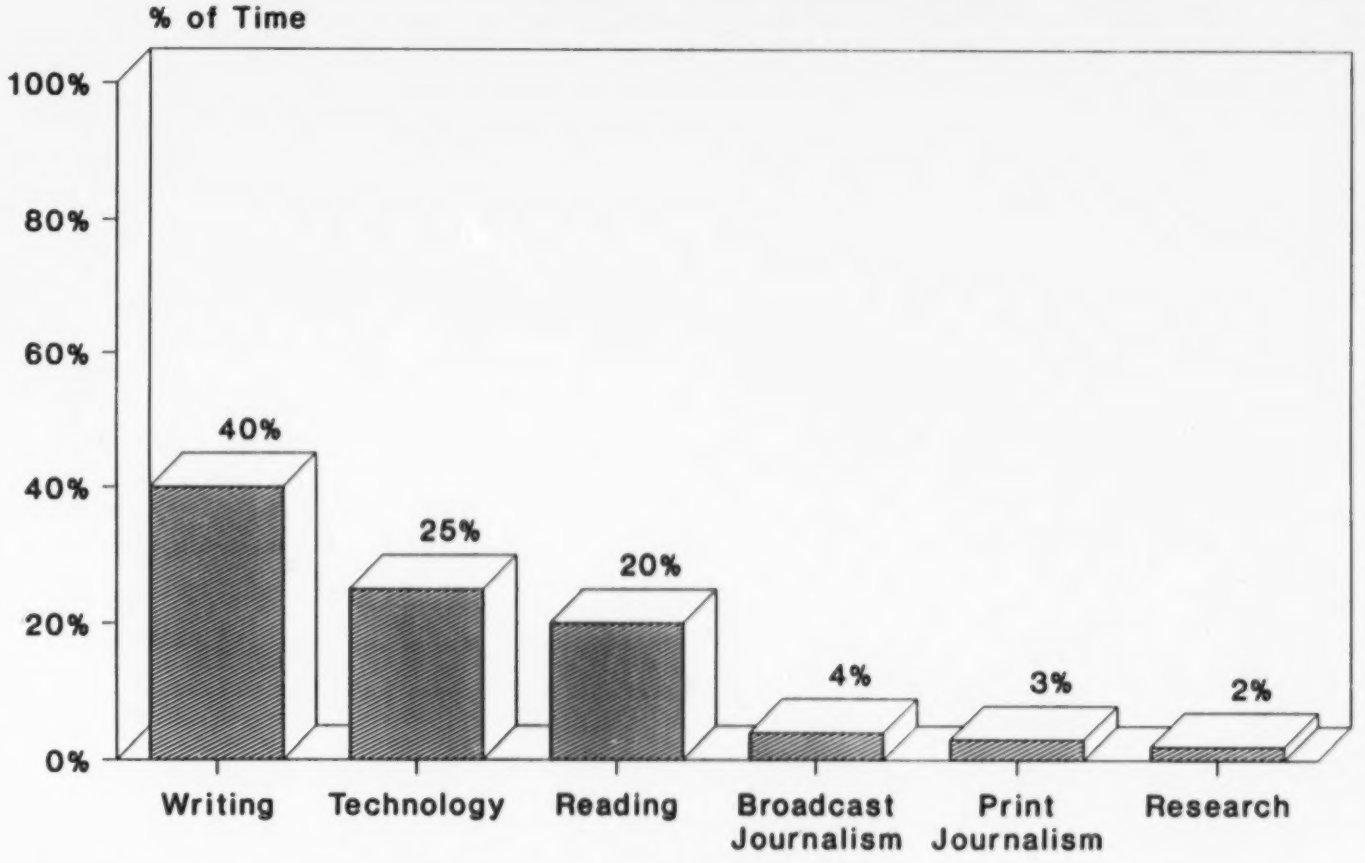
Note: Data are percentile ranks based on mean grade equivalents.

[1] The year prior to magnet theme implementation.

Table 14
Westport Communications/Writing Middle School
Missouri Mastery & Achievement Tests
Average Scale Scores, 1993

	English/Language Arts			Math		
Grade	Westport	District	State	Westport	District	State
Sixth	225	240	NA	257	271	NA
Eighth	238	266	NA	246	258	NA

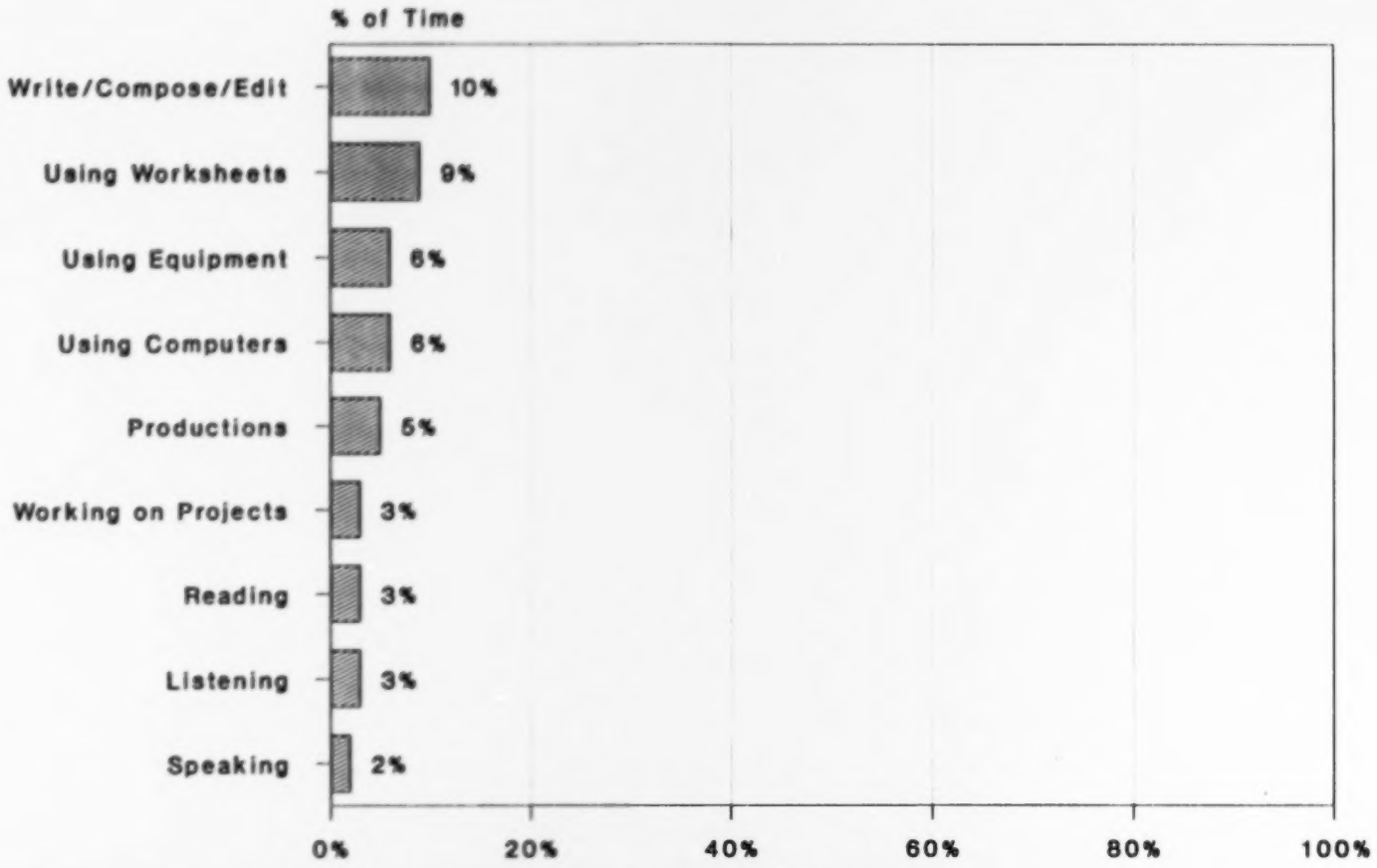
Figure 1
Topic Observed in Theme Classes



Topic Cumulative Observation Minutes = 1161 (See Table 6).
Westport Communications/Writing Middle School, 1993

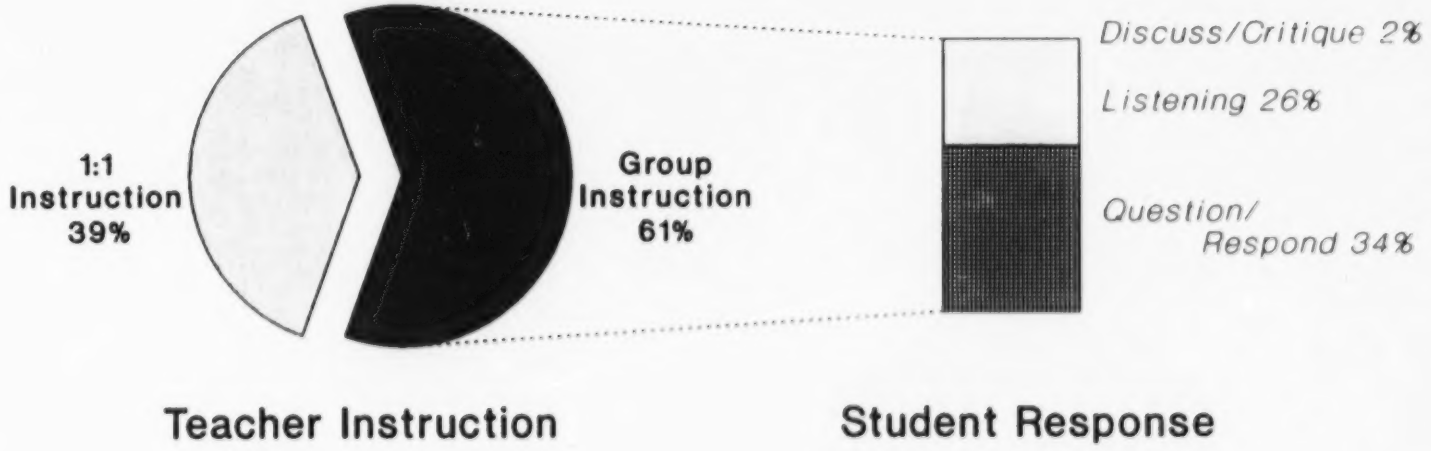
Figure 2

Student Activity Observed in Theme Classes



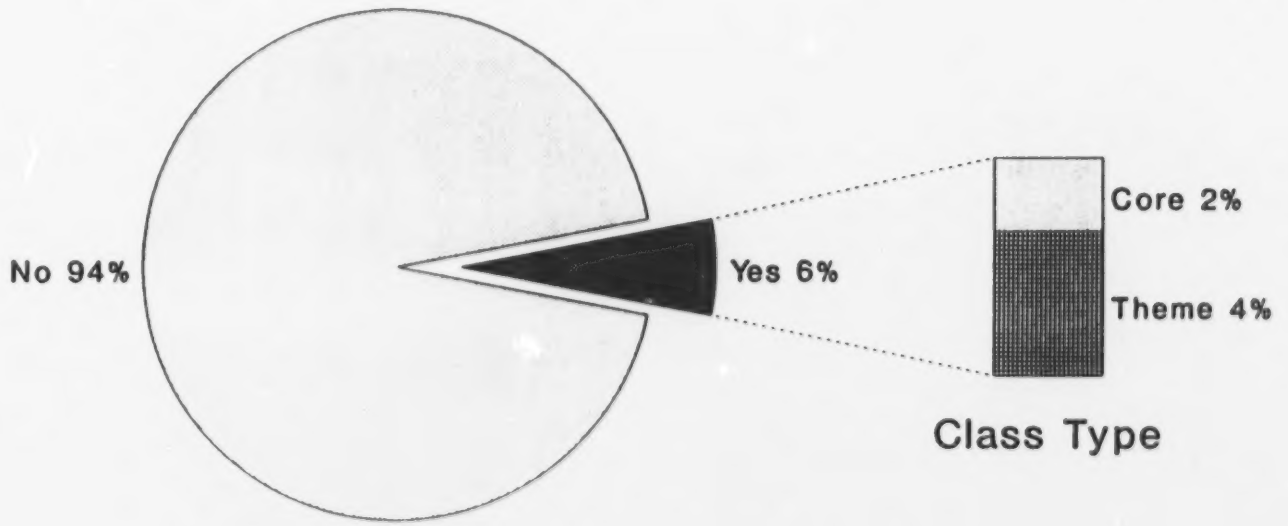
Student Activity Cumulative Observation Minutes • 2509 (See Table 6).
Westport Communications/Writing Middle School, 1993

Figure 3
Teacher Instruction and Student Response Observed in Theme Classes



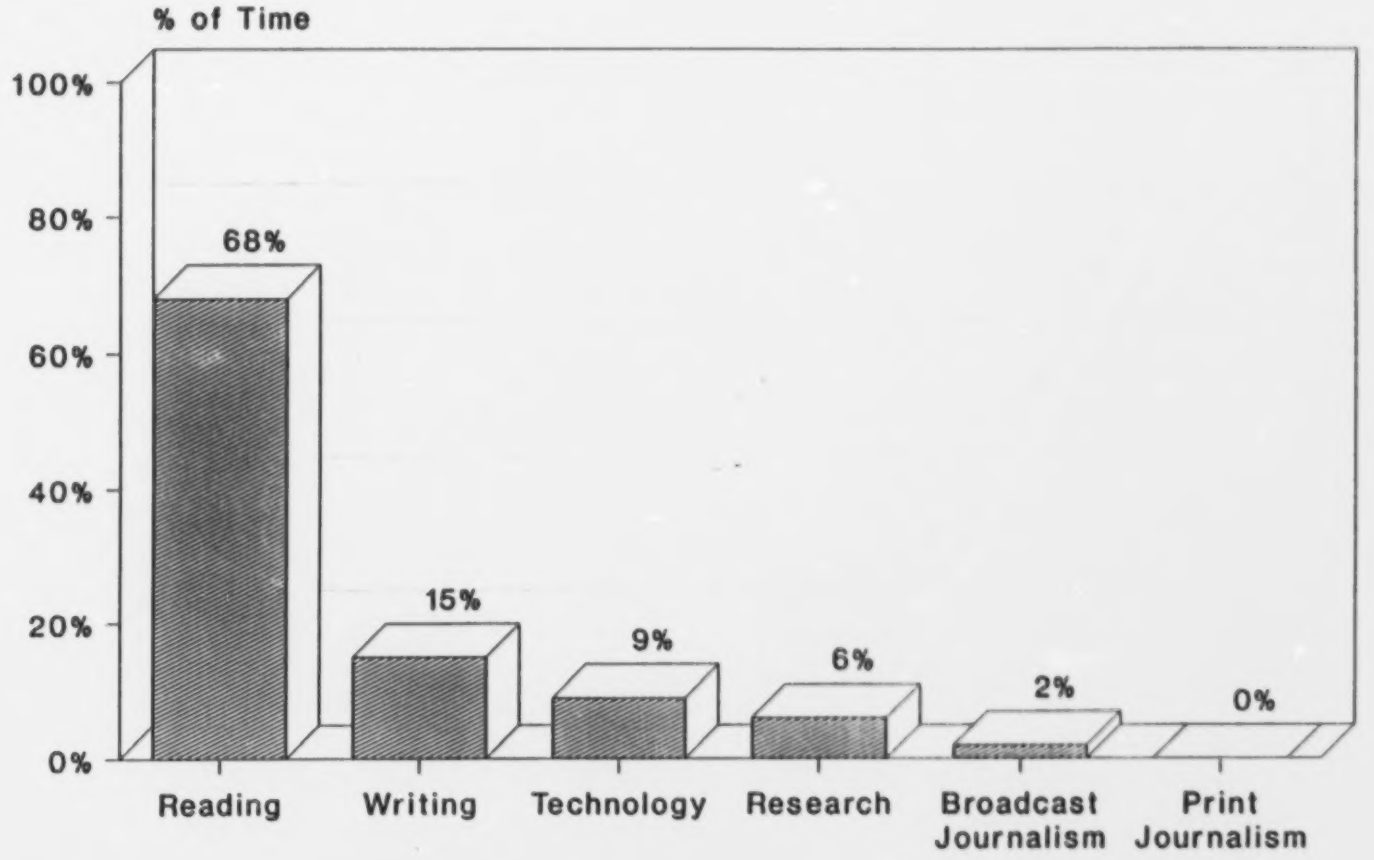
Teacher Instruction Observed 808 minutes or 32% of cumulative student activity (see Table 6).
Westport Communications/Writing Middle School, 1993

Figure 4
Multicultural Infusion Observed in Theme and Core Classes



Observations in Theme and Core Classes • 1672 Minutes.
Westport Communications/Writing Middle School, 1993

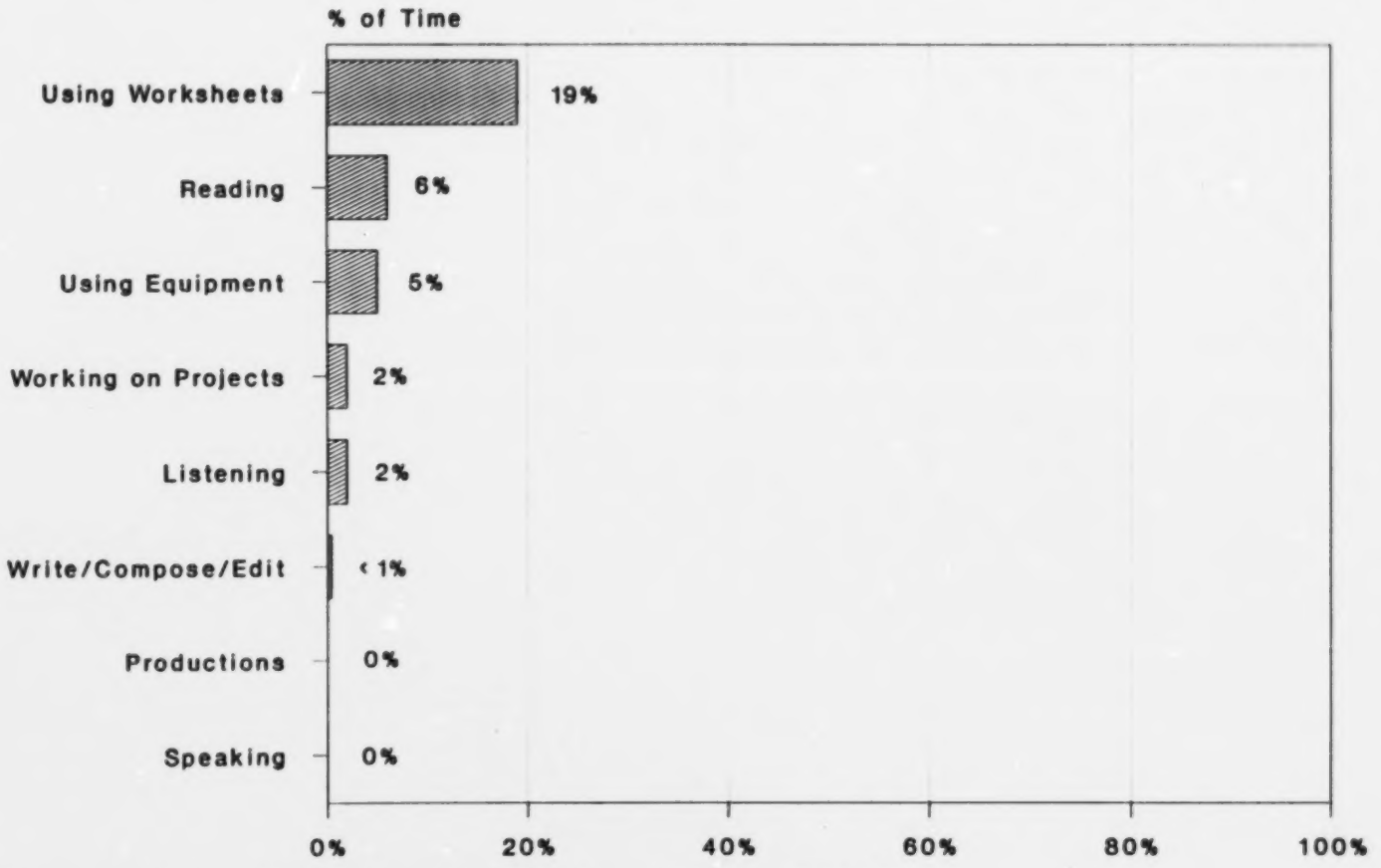
Figure 5
Topic Observed in Core Classes



Topic Cumulative Observation Minutes = 47 (See Table 7).
Westport Communications/Writing Middle School, 1993

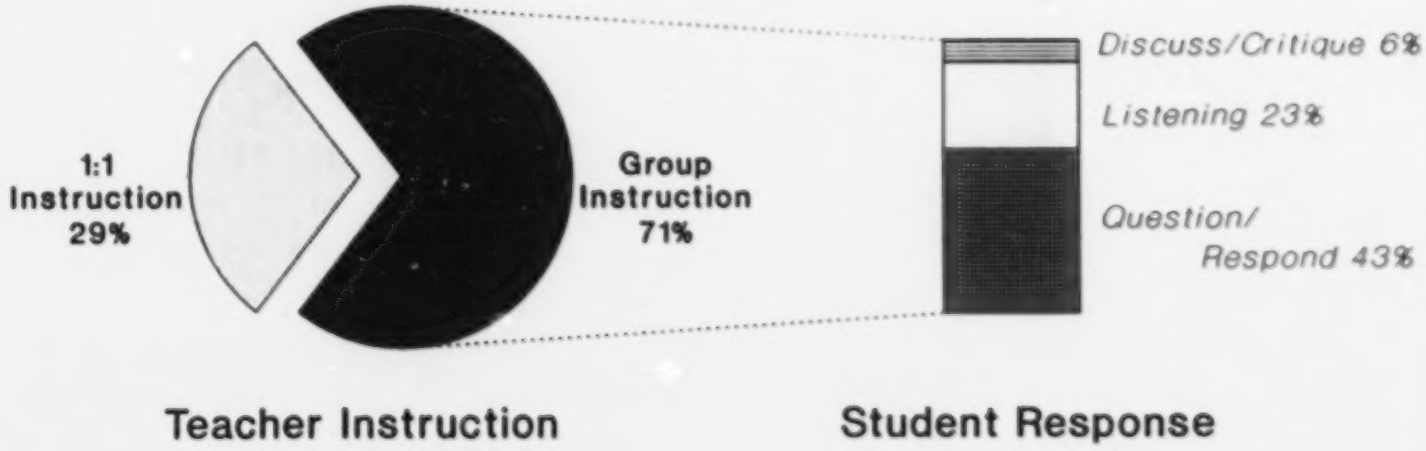
Figure 6

Student Activity Observed in Core Classes



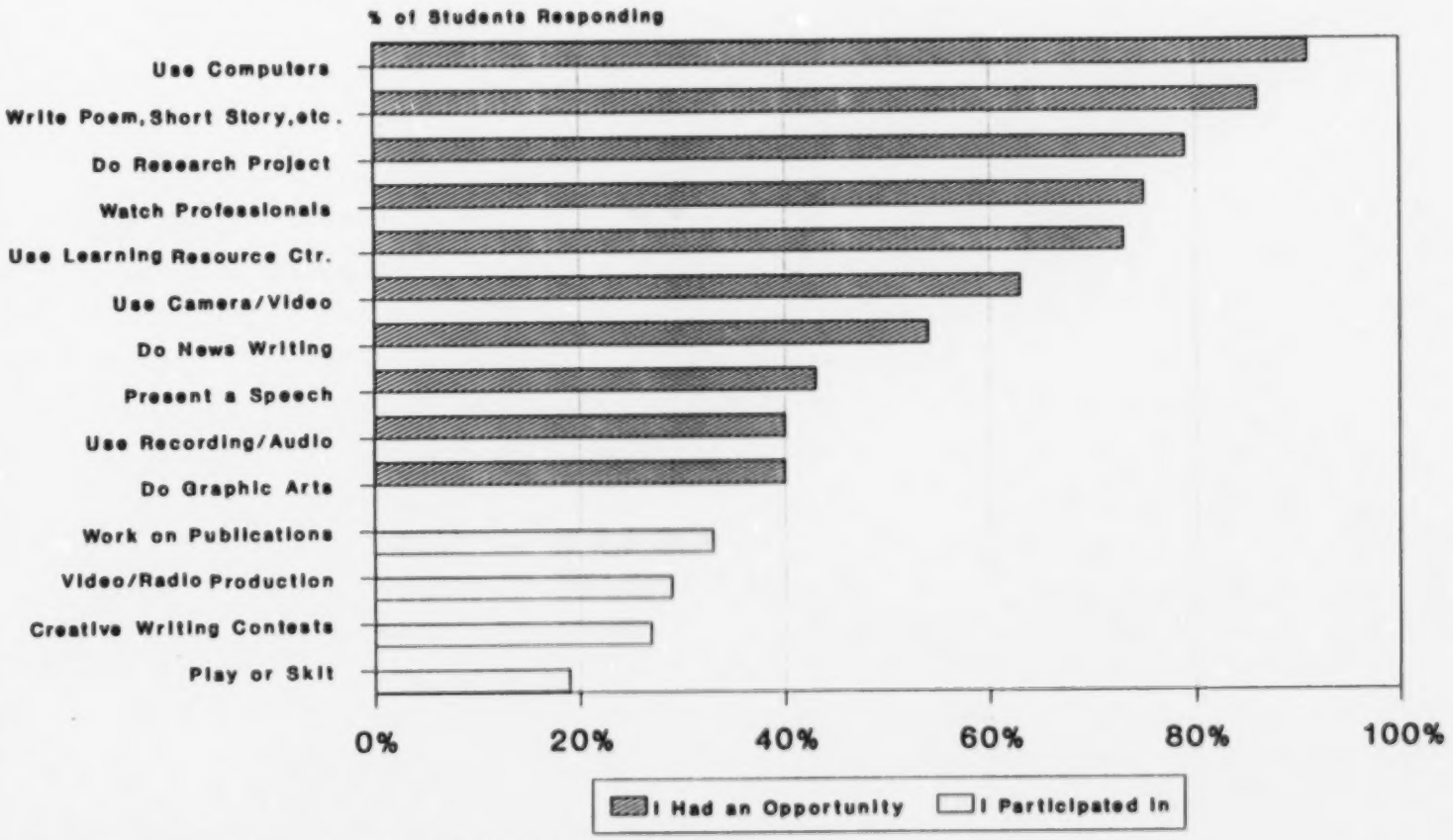
Student Activity Cumulative Observation Minutes = 688 (See Table 7).
Westport Communications/Writing Middle School, 1993

Figure 7
Teacher Instruction and Student Response Observed in Core Classes



Teacher Instruction Observed 262 minutes or 38% of cumulative student activity (see Table 7).
Westport Communications/Writing Middle School, 1993

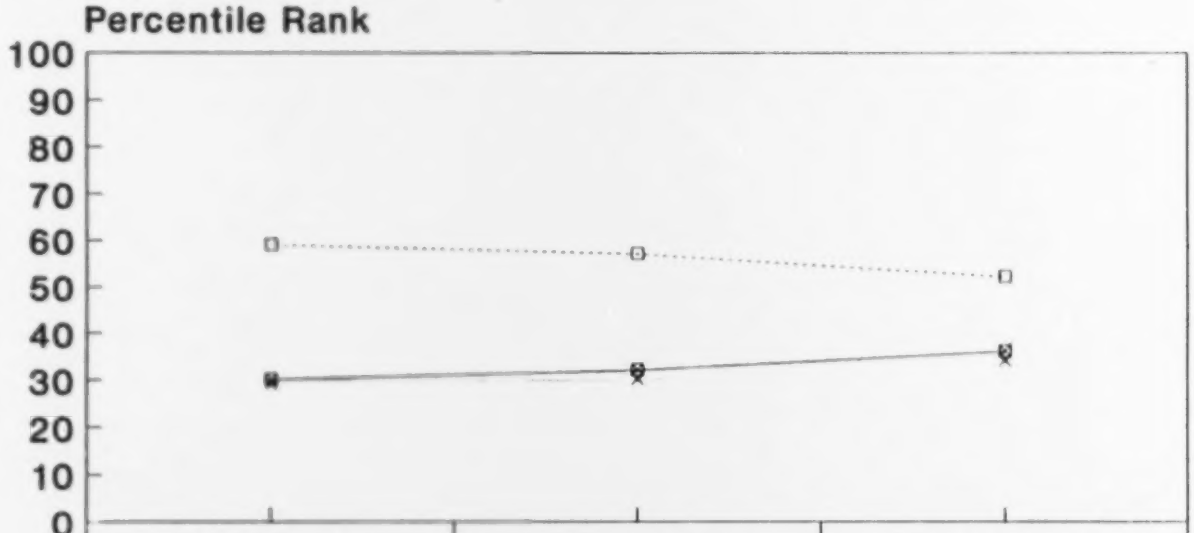
Figure 8
Student Perceived Opportunities in Theme Activities



Westport Communications/Writing Middle School, 1993

Figure 9

ITBS Reading Achievement Across Time
1991 Sixth Grade Cohort



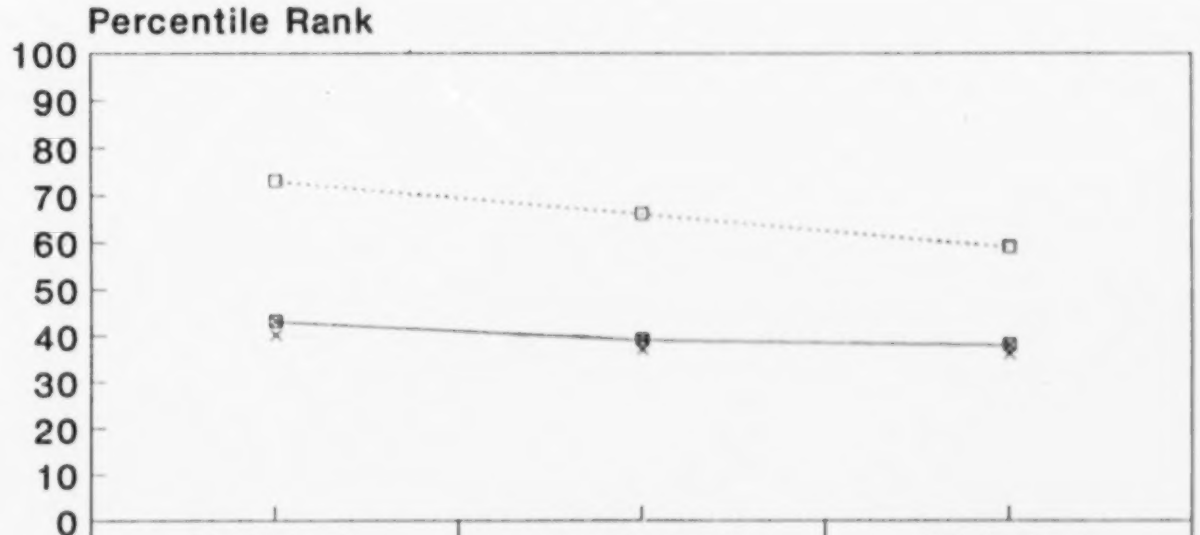
	Sixth Grade 1991	Seventh Grade 1992	Eighth Grade 1993
Minority ×	29	30	34
Non-Min. ··□··	59	57	52
Total —■—	30	32	36

Note: Percentile ranks were converted from mean grade equivalent scores.

Westport Communications/Writing Middle School, 1993

Figure 10

ITBS Language Achievement Across Time
1991 Sixth Grade Cohort

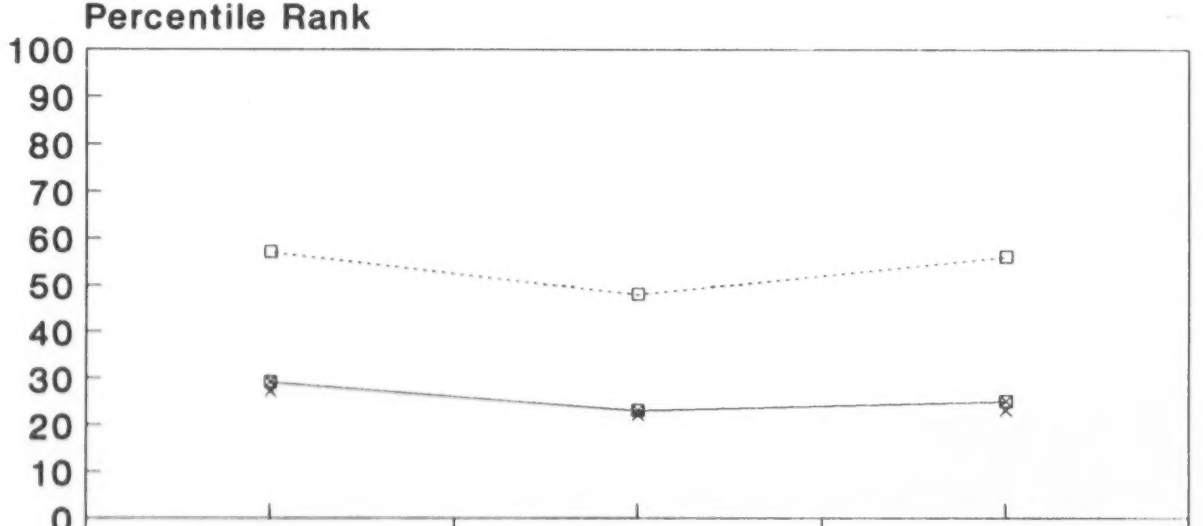


	Sixth Grade 1991	Seventh Grade 1992	Eighth Grade 1993
Minority	40	37	36
Non-Min.	73	66	59
Total	43	39	38

Note: Percentile ranks were converted from mean grade equivalent scores.

Westport Communications/Writing Middle School, 1993

Figure 11
ITBS Math Achievement Across Time
1991 Sixth Grade Cohort



	Sixth Grade 1991	Seventh Grade 1992	Eighth Grade 1993
Minority ×	27	22	23
Non-Min. ···□···	57	48	56
Total —■—	29	23	25

Note: Percentile ranks were converted from mean grade equivalent scores.

Westport Communications/Writing Middle School, 1993

Appendix A
Westport Communications/Writing Middle School
Parent Perceptions: Transportation (N= 74), Spring 1993

Question	N[1]	Yes	No
1. Does your child either ride a school bus or take a taxi to get to school?	73	96%	4%
If yes to above:			
2. Do you believe the school bus or taxi runs on schedule?	70	70%	30%
3. Do you believe the school bus or taxi takes your child to school and back in a reasonable amount of time?	69	91%	9%
4. Do you believe the school bus or taxi is safe?	67	87%	13%

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percent.
[1] Responses reflect only those parents who expressed an opinion.

The School District of Kansas City, Missouri